THE OINWARAS IN THE MUGHAL PERIOD

BY

Hetukar Jha

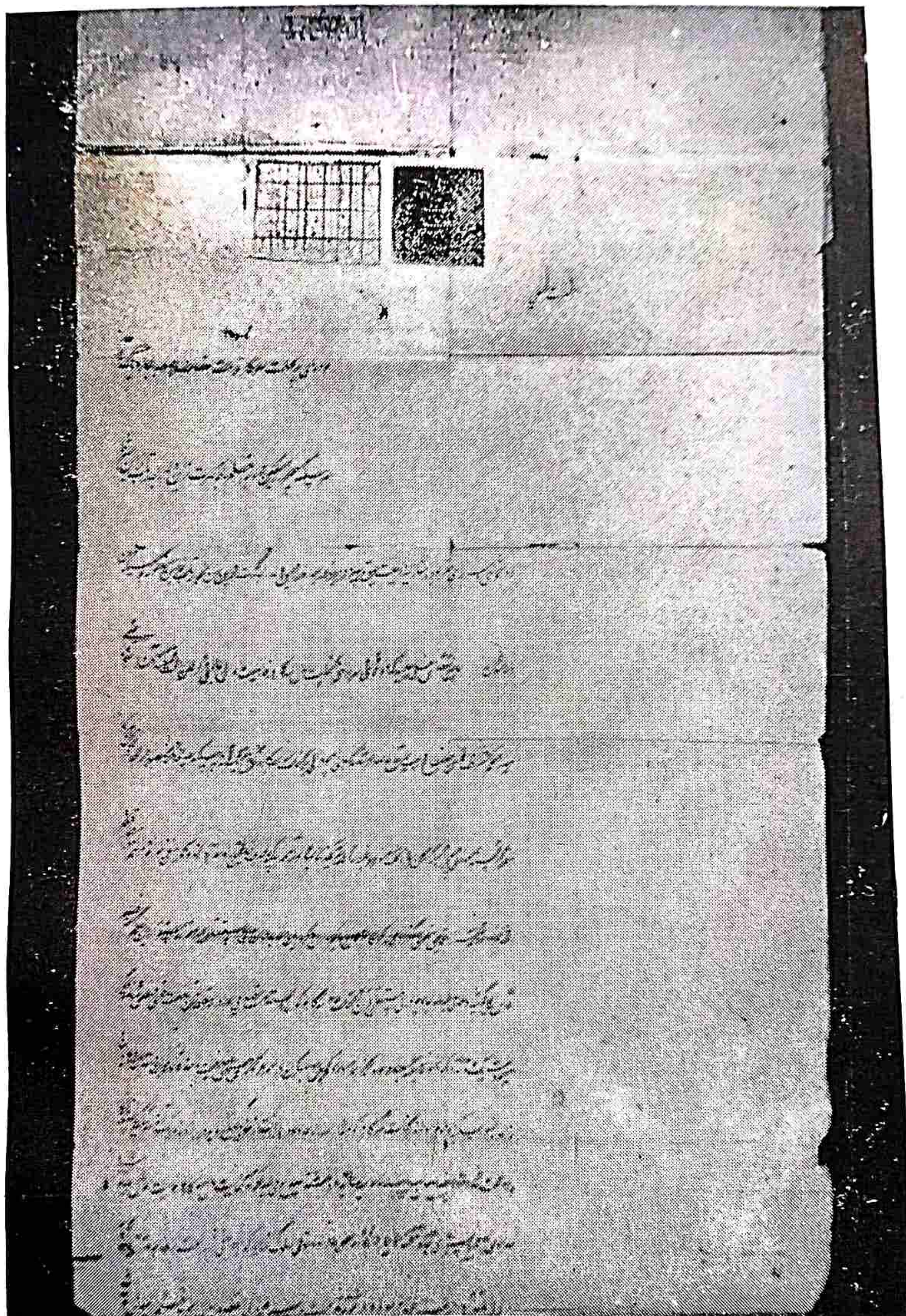
After the rule of the Karṇāṭa dynasty over Mithilā had a serious setback to the extent of total liquidation, there emerged a distinct deviation in the outlook of traditional Maithila Brahmins. Instead of sticking absolutely to the traditional Brahminical occupation and life style, they committed themselves to the job of statecraft, hitherto unknown to them. One can pinpoint it as the real '*Yuga-Parivartana*' i. e. the socio-cultural change. The Oinwaras are a celebrated house among the Maithila Brahmins who were the first to assume powers after the Karṇāṭas to rule over the land of Mithilā. Since then upto the cotemporary period persons noted for their genius in the field of literature and history have surveyed this dynasty in a number of ways. In the present paper too, an attempt has been made to bring some new evidences concerning this dynasty in the Mughal period to light.

Recently, in the month of May, 1970, Shri Chetadhar Narain Singh of village Lohana of Darbhanga District, gave a me geneological table of the Oinwar Dynasty, showing himself the eighteenth Oinwar from Kameshwar Thakur, the founder of the dynasty, a Farman of Aurangzeb and a scroll which he claimed that it was presented to his ancestor by the Emperor Aurangzeb himself along with the said Farman.

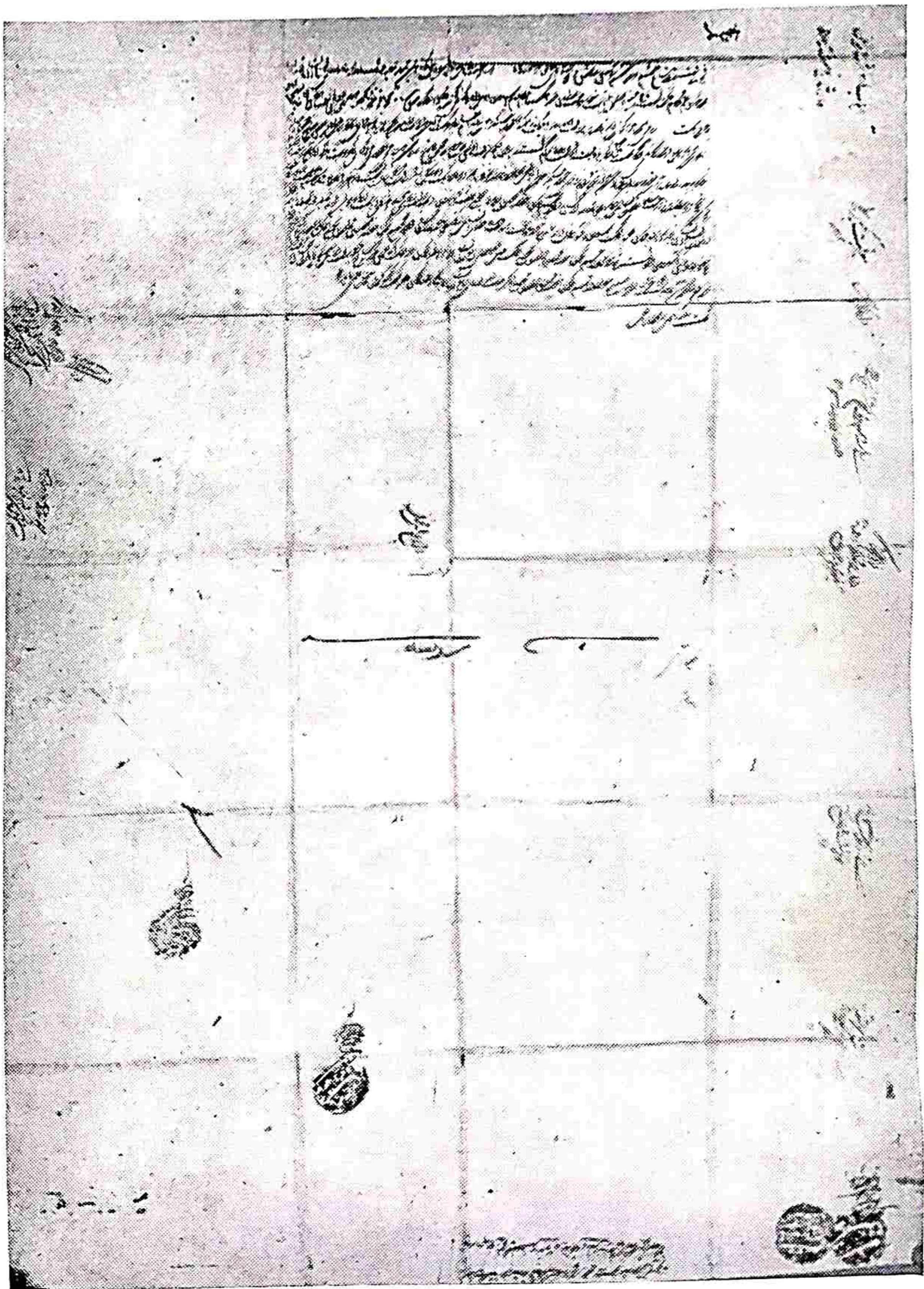
The Farman of Aurangzeb and the genealogical table available from the above mentioned person seem to be significantly throwing light upon the history of Mithilā of the Mughal period. This Farman is 3′ 8″ in length and 1′ 8½″ in breadth. It contains Tughra seal of the emperor Aurangzeb in red ink in the left side and circular seal in black ink in the right side. The paper is of thick hand-made variety. Below is given its translation (see plate) :—

"The *Choudharaī* of the Paraganas of *Sarkar Tirhut* attached to the *Subah* of Bihar, (and a remuneration) at the rate of one anna per *bigha* (and) *five thousand bighas* of land were granted as *Inām* to Raja Kirat Narain son of Raja Pratap Narain on condition of performing the chieftainship and well-wishing of the government. The grantee died (in course of time).

In the mean time, Raja Rudranarain, son of Raja Kirat Narain son of Raja Pratab Narain brought to the imperial notice that in accor-



Front page of the Farman of Aurangzeb



Back page of the Farman of Aurangzeb

dance with the previous *Farman* he had been continuing in the chieftainship and well wishing of the government, augmenting the revenue of the government, and promoting the interest of the *raiyats* and keeping them satisfied with his administration. (Therefore) the exalted, obedience enforcing order is hereby issued that the *Rajaī* and *Choudharaī* of the *Paraganas* of the said *Sarkar* (and the remuneration) at the rate of one anna per bigha may continue with the aforesaid Raja Rudranarain (but) the five thousand bighas of land may be resumed and restored to the *Khalisa.* (The remuneration of) one anna per bigha may be regarded as pertaining to his (Raja's) expenditure. He should behave himself and observe the established regulations and formalities and he should in no way associate himself with prohibited actions.

And the present and the future functionaries "*Amils, Jagirdars, Karoris* and *Faujdars*" should strive for the enforcement and perpetuation of this exalted order and regard the aforementioned person as the permanent *Raja* and *Choudhary* of the *Paraganas* of the said *Sarkar* and render him all assistance in the performance of his official duties and should not treat anyone as his partner or co-sharer, and render unto him (the income of) one anna per bigha. The *discendents of Gopal and Shubhakaran* have no right in the above mentioned affairs, nor should they be allowed any (power of interference in future).

The Quanungoes, Muqaddams, raiyats, peasants and the common people living in the paraganas of the said Sarkar should recognize the said person as *Raja* and *Choudhary* and they should not go beyond his advice and they should render unto him, each season and each year (the remuneration of) one anna per bigha which has been granted to him as *Nankar.* The aforementioned grantee should not violate in the least the *Amal Dasturas* (administrative regulations) in his efforts for augmenting the revenue of the Government and promoting the interest of the raiyats and he should keep the raiyats pleased with his behaviour; and he should treat them in such a way that cultivation is increasingly promoted. (All concerned) should treat this as urgent and should not deviate from the order.

Written on the 23rd Ziqa'd, 37 regnal year (1695 A. D.)"

On the back page of the Farman there are only indorsements of the usual offices through which the Farman passed and there are four seals, including one that of the then Wazir (minister) Asad Khan."[1]

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1 The author is grateful to Dr. Q. Ahmad, of the Department of History, P. U. and Mr. A. A. Kazimi of the Department of Arabic, Patna College,

This is, to the best of the author's knowledge, the first farman available so far from the house of the Oinwaras. As it is evident from this Farman itself, the Oinwaras, before Raja Rudranarain must have got some Farman from some of the ancestors of the emperor Aurangzeb on the basis of which the said Raja approached the emperor for the continuity of his *Rajāi*, *Choudharai*, five thousand bighas of land and one anna per bigha from all the parganas of Sarkar Tirhut. But unfortunately no other Farmans have been available except this one from the existing remains of the said dynasty. Yet this much is proved beyond any doubt by this Farman alone that this dynasty was given due recognition by the successive Mughal emperors upto Aurangzeb. At the same time, of all the Farmans given by Mughal emperors to the houses of Mithilā (Khaṇḍavalās and Oinwaras), this is the solitary one in which the emperor addresses the grantee and his forefathers as Raja and Rajas.[2]

It means that this house continued to possess the royalty even after the Mūghal empire was inaugurated on the Indian soil, although many scholars believe that the Oinwar dynasty was already dismembered. Dr. Upendra Thakur has precisely traced the period of the rule of the Oinwaras on Mithilā from 1353 A. D. to 1526 A. D.[3] According to him Lakshminatha Deva was the last king of this dynasty, who died as early as in 1526 A. D.[4] and then one Maithila Kayastha Majumdar, one Majlis Khan and others were the immediate successors.[5] According to Mm. Parmeshwar Jha, Mahesh Thakur, the founder of the Khaṇḍavalā dynasty reduced the Oinwaras to the extent of possessing only four

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P. U. for making a translation of the Farman originally in Persian character into English.

2 Ahmad Q.— "Origin and Growth of Dasbhanga Raj (1574-1666) based on some contemporary and unpublished documents"— Indian Historical Records Commission, Proeeedings volume XXXVI, Part II, Chandigarh, Febcuruary, 1961 (pp. 89-98). Dr. Ahmad has based his work on the four documents (i) Farman of Akbar given to Gopal Ṭhakur (whose name has been mentioned in this Farman too) (ii) Mahzarnama of Sundar Thakur (iii) Farman of Aurangzeb (1666 A. D.) earlier than this Farman. (iv) And a letter of Aurangzeb (1666 A. D,) addressed to Laskar Khan the then Governor of Bihar. In none of these documents one could find any of the Khanḍavalās from Gopal Thakur to Mahinath Thakur who had won great admiration from Aurangzeb, being addressed as Raja. Of course, as Dr. Ahmad's work suggests they had Choudharai and Quanungoi and Zamindari.

3 Thakur Upendra—History of Mithila (p. 290), Mithila Institute Darbhanga, 1956.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 336-339.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 342.

paraganas of Mithilā.[6] In the 'History of Darbhanga Raj'[7] by Dr. J. S. Jha, upto the emperor Aurangzeb there is no trace of Oinwaras. It is only during the later Mughals a few names are available like Roopnarain as only a Zamindar of four Paraganas having encounter with Raja Raghava Singh. Another name, which is also available is that of Fatehnarain as Malik of only one Paragana having encounter with Raja Pratap Singh the fourth king after Raja Raghava Singh.[8]

Prof. Radhakrishna Choudhary has tackled the works of Vidyāpati in order to present a historical sketch of the latter's Patron-dynasty.[9] This is why no account of later Oinwaras of the Mughal Period is available there. Another scholar, Kamalnarain Jha 'Kamlesh' holds the view that after Kamshanarain (1549-50 A. D.) his successors ceased to possess their royalty and "the state broke into pieces and the territory owned by Oinwaras was confined to a number of villages around and the capital 'Sugaon' which till late continued to be in their possession in the form of Zamindari"[10] Thus almost all the scholars of the history of Mithilā believe it to be true that for about two hundred years before the Mughals the Oinwaras maintained a unique dynasty patronizing the Pandits of immense eminence like Vidyāpati, Pakshadhar, Shankar etc. in whose works the kings of the dynasty still live, who were courageous enough to rebel for independence and ultimately unfortunate enough to liquidate to the extent of total disappearance from the history of Mithilā after 1526 A. D. The present Farman thoroughly invalidates such a thesis and clearly states that *Rajai* or Kingship remained with the Oinwaras even during the Mughal regime. One may further notice that two names—Gopal and Shubhakaran have been mentioned in the Farman. Gopal and Shubhakaran are Gopal Thakur and Shubhankar Thakur, the sons of Mahesh Thakur the founder of the Khaṇḍavalā Dynasty. Even in this Farman they have not been addressed as Rajas and their descendants (perhaps Mahinatha Thakur or Narpati Thakur might be there at the

6 Jha Mm. Parmeshwar—Mithilā Tattva Vimarsha (p. 14 Uttarardh), Pub. by Harishchandra Jha, Tarauni, Darbhanga, 1949.

7 Jha J. S.—"History of Darbhanga Raj," Maharajadhiraj Kameshwar Singh Memorial Volume, Part I, *JBRS* Vol. XLVIII, 1962, p. 36.

8 Jha, J. S.—"Land Revenue Administration under the Khaṇḍavalā Rulers of Darbhanga", *JBRS* Vol. LIII, Jan. Dec. 1967, Part I-IV, p. 234.

9 Choudhary, Radhakrishna—"The Oinwaras of Mithila" *JBRS*, Vol. XL, Part II June, 1954, pp. 99-121.

10 Jha, Kamlanarain 'Kamlesh'—The Oinwaras period—A Golden Age in the History of Mithila"—*JBRS*. Vol. XLIV, Part III-IV, Sept. December, 1958, p. 216.

time of the issue of Farman) have been prohibited to interfere in the *Rajai* and *Choudhari* of Raja Rudranarain. The Mughal Emperors as it appears from farman refused to recognize any family other than Oinwaras, the royal dynasty. This is why the Khaṇḍavalās, although the Farman given to Mahinath Thakur by the Emperor Aurangzeb in 16^6 A. D. suggests that they became materially very substantial and powerful, yet failed to get *Rajai* from the hands of the Mughal Emperors. The first Khaṇḍavalā to get the *Rajai* is Raghav Singh and that too from Alivardi after the death of Aurangzeb.[11] The years following this event perhaps bred only misfortune for the Oinwaras. The Mahzarnama of Madhava Singh narrates an event which shows how Raghava Singh got the Paragana of Bachhaur from Roopnarain a mere Zamindar of only four Paraganas.[12] Roopnarain was the grandson of Rudranarain who was granted the Farman discussed in the paper. It seems that the loosening of the Mughal empire was accompanied with the deterioration of the condition of the Oinwara dynasty in Mithilā, which ultimately resulted in the establishment of kingship with the Khaṇḍavalās and the reduction of the dynasty of the Oinwaras into a mere Zamindari.

Thus one can easily infer that the chapter of royalty with the Oinwaras cannot be closed with the arrival of Mughals, it rather ends with Aurangzeb, if not later.

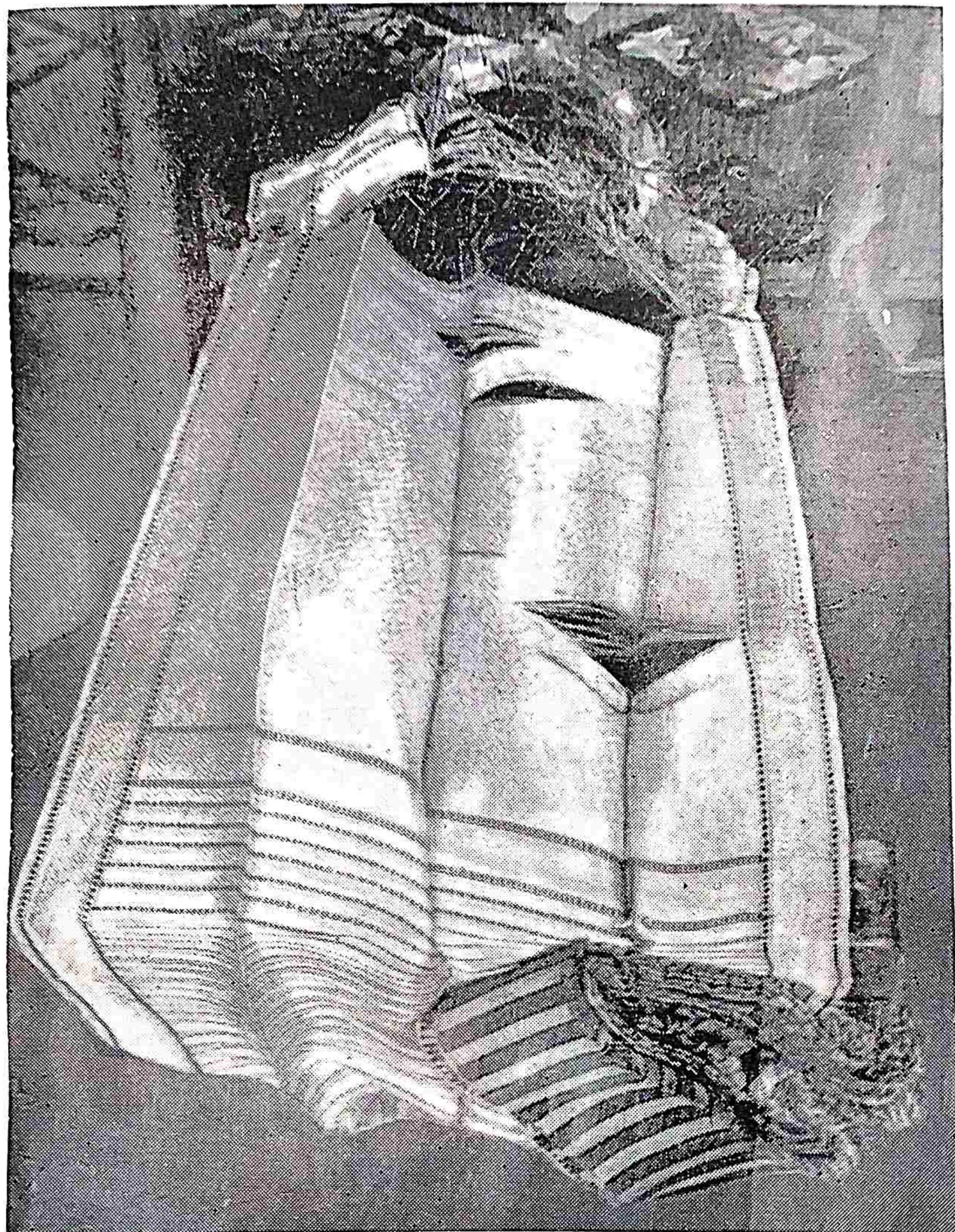
Another important document available from Shri Chetadharnarain Singh is the geneological record of his house. One has to support that the record should be authentic particularly when the Maithila Pañjī available with Prof. Ramanath Jha of Darbhanga too has more or less a similar record of this house. Both the records (one available from Shri Singh and the other from Sri Jha) are given below :—

1. Shri Singh's Record

Raj Pandit Kameshwar Thakur
|
Maharaj Bhuvaneshwar
|
Maharaj Deva Singh
|
Maharaj Shiva Singh
|
Kumar Ratnakara (nephew Successor)
|

11 Jha, J. S.—History of Darbhanga Raj, Maharajadhiraja Kameshwar Singh, Vol. of *JBRS*, p. 35.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 36.



Scroll

Kumar Matikar
|
Maharaj Harasingh
|
Maharaj Ramchandranarain Singh
|
Maharaj Pratap Narain Singh
|
Maharaj Keertinarain Singh
|
Maharaj Rudranarain Singh
|
Maharaj Laxminarain Singh
|
Maharaj Roopanarain Singh
|
Raja Fatehnarain Singh
|
Raj Girdharnarain Singh
|
Raja Sridharnarain Singh
|
Shashidhar Narain Singh (Grandson from daughter's side)
|
Sri Chetadharnarain Singh

2. Record from the Pañji

Kameshwar Thakur......................Harshan Thakur
(Raj was divided between the two brothers)
|
Shibaya
|
Prabhakar
|
Raja Ratnakar
|
Kumar Matikar
|
Maharaja Harasingh
|
Maharaj Ramchandranarain
|
Maharaj Pratapnarain
|
Maharaj Keertinarain
|
Maharaj Rudranarain
|
Maharaj Laxminarain
|
Maharaj Kansanarain
|
Maharaj Fatehnarain

The author's wish to attach herewith these two important record concerning the Oinwaras dynasty from two different, supposed to be authentic, sources is based on the belief that it is also a duty of a student of history to bring facts to the notice of historians no matter whether these pose a problem or place a solution. And certainly these records open many a problem concerning the relationship of the Oinwaras with the history of Mithilā.

The Pañjī record, *Raja* with only Ratnakar (as it has been shown above) and not with his father or grandfather. This support the authenticity of Shri Singh's record that Kumar Ratnakar being only a nephew succeeded Maharaj Shiva Singh. But these records differ at one point. The name of Maharaj Roopnarain is missing in the Pañjī record and instead, Kansanarain is there. Kansanarain, as has been already mentioned according to Dr. Thakur, was the last king of this dynasty who died some time in 1526 A.D. It is just possibie that Kansanarain, available in the Pañjī record might be the other name of Roopnarain. The name of Roopnarain as the son of Laxminarain, son of Rudranarain seems to be authentic because Dr. J. S. Jha's account of Darbhanga Raj during Raghava Singh's regime does mention such a name. At the same time, the Farman, (which has been already dealt with) mentions three names Raja Rudranarain, son of Raja Keertinarain, son of Raja Pratapnarain which are avilable in the record of Shri Singh in the same order. Mm. Parameshwar Jha[13] has also mentioned one geneological record which tallies with the one available from Shri Singh, but for his comment that this lineage is not the royal one rather only a Babuana. Mm. Jha as well as others have traced the royal lineage only up to Kansanarain. But in the light of the present Farman, it is difficult to believe that the geneological record of Shri Singh is only a Babuana lineage and not the royal one. Had it been really a Babuana lineage, how would, of all the emperors Aurangzeb have addressed the persons belonging to this lineage as Rajas particularly when he refused even Khaṇḍavalās this royal previlage whom he made a great power ?

The third and last article available from Sri Singh is a scrol. As he claims that this was presented by the emperor Aurangzeb himself along with the Farman, it seems to be true. The appearance of the scroll is quite regal and old. It has been preserved with all care that Sri Singh and his ancestors could afford. Yet, it is slightly damaged. The length of it is 29′ 8″ and width is 1′ 8″.

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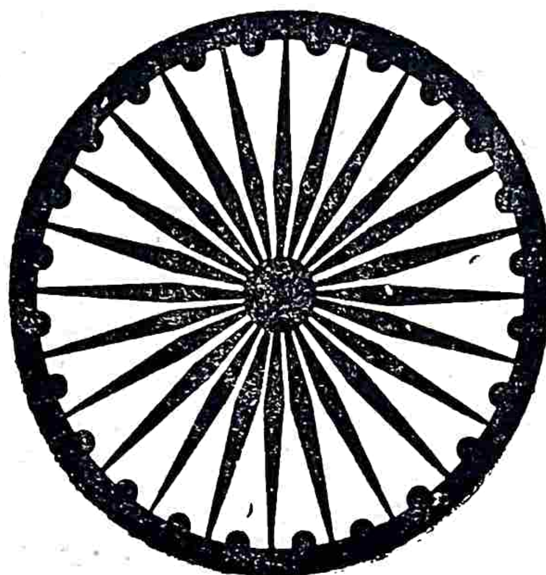
13 Jha, Mm. Parmeshwar—Mithila Tattva Vimarsha, Purvardha, (p. 224).

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